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CONGRESSMAN ED CASE 2ND DISTRICT, HAWAII

ISLANDS OF HAWAII, MAUI, KAHOLAWE, LANAI,
MOLOKA'I, O'AHU (WINDWARD, NORTH SHORE,
CENTRAL, LEEWARD), KAUAI AND NI'HAU,
AND NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

July 2005

COMMITTEES:

BUDGET

AGRICULTURE
LIVESTOCK AND HORTICULTURE
(RANKING MEMBER)

CONSERVATION, CREDIT,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

SMALL BUSINESS
TAX, FINANCE AND EXPORTS

REGULATORY REFORM
AND OVERSIGHT

RURAL ENTERPRISES, AGRICULTURE
AND TECHNOLOGY

FILIPINO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY REPORT

Dear Friends:

I am proud and humbled to represent more Filipino-Americans (about 140,000) than any of the 440 members of my U.S. House of Representatives. In this, I join my colleagues in advocating for the interests of what are now almost 2.4 million Filipino-Americans nationwide, one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups, in both numbers and influence, in our country.

As you know so well, these are incredibly exciting times for Filipino-Americans everywhere. First, in 2006 we will all celebrate the centennial of sustained immigration from the Philippines to our country and, with it, the rich culture and history of Filipino-Americans. But beyond that great event, we are also realizing the fruits of the sacrifices made by your predecessors in the achievement and involvement of Filipino-Americans throughout the extent of our society, in both our Hawaii and throughout our country.

Yet these successes are matched by many remaining challenges. Of course, Filipino-Americans seek the same goals as all other Americans: good jobs, education and housing; adequate and affordable health care; safety and security for our families and communities; equality of treatment and opportunity for our children; full participation in our government; and a fair and peaceful world. I am committed to these goals on behalf of all of my constituents.

But there are also many issues that affect Filipino-Americans more than most Americans, like immigration, and our country's relationship with the Asia-Pacific region and specifically with the Republic of the Philippines. This report to our Hawaii's Filipino-American community has three purposes. The first is to tell you what I've been doing in Congress to address specific Filipino-American needs. The second is to let you know what my congressional office can and wants to do for you. And the third is to ask for your input on what more you want me to do for your community.

I say to all my colleagues, and feel deeply, that I represent the best state and district in our country, in large part because I am fortunate to represent a constituency of such rich cultural diversity. Our Filipino-American community is a vital part of our Hawaii's fabric, and I am truly thankful for the opportunity to be your Congressman.

With deep aloha,

Ed Case

Ed Case
United States Congressman
Hawaii, Second District

This mailer was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.

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A. Selected National Filipino-American Issues

1. U.S.-Philippines Congressional Caucus

Our country has a long and proud history with the Republic of the Philippines which, like any relationship, must be nurtured through constant attention. This, together with our growing Filipino-American community, presents your Congress with many related issues in our foreign and domestic policy.

In addressing these issues and advocating for good decisions, I seek to act collectively with my colleagues in Congress who share my concerns and goals. This is why we formed, back in early 2003, the U.S.-Philippines Congressional Caucus, a group of members who all share a common interest in the U.S.-Philippines relationship and in our Filipino-American communities (there are now, for example, 57 U.S. Representatives who represent at least 10,000 Filipino-Americans each.) Together we have been able to bring our collective influence to bear on behalf of common concerns like benefits for Filipino veterans.

2. 2006 Centennial of Filipino Immigration

Sustained immigration from the Philippines to our country (specifically to Hawaii) began in 1906 with arrival of the first sakadas. The one hundredth anniversary of that event gives us all a wonderful opportunity to celebrate not only a century of achievement for Filipino-Americans but the continuing promise of the American dream.

The Smithsonian Institution, our country's national museum in Washington, D.C., plans to commemorate this centennial with a whole range of national events. We also have created in Hawaii the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission, chaired by Elias Beniga, to plan and coordinate celebrations throughout Hawaii (see www.filipinosinhawaii100.org). I am pleased to serve on the Smithsonian commemoration's honorary council, and to be actively working with both federal and state efforts to assure a centennial truly worthy of this accomplishment.

As part of this effort, I recently introduced into the U.S. House H.Con.Res. 218, a concurrent resolution under which the Congress would formally recognize the centennial, acknowledge the achievements of our Filipino-Americans, and express continued support for the longstanding ties between our country and the Philippines. Copies of my resolution and introductory statement are attached for your review.

3. U.S.-Philippines Relations

There are several issues ongoing between our country and the Philippines. Our caucus has taken the lead in advocating for the continuity and strengthening of that relationship, ranging from easing of travel restrictions to enhanced foreign aid, and maintains ongoing relationships in D.C. with representatives of the Philippines such as Ambassador to the United States Albert del Rosario. I have individually visited Ambassador del Rosario at the Embassy of the Philippines, and written President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (copy of letter attached.) These overall efforts are crucial, especially as we witness the true emergence of the Asia-Pacific region onto the world stage in the early years of this century.

4. World War II Filipino Veterans

We are all only too well aware of the travesty of our country's actions in 1946 in going back on our word to provide citizenship and veterans benefits to Filipino troops who fought alongside ours in World War II. For this reason, one of my first efforts in the 108th Congress (2003-2004) was to join my colleagues in introducing legislation to finally and fully honor our commitment.

Although a measure of success was obtained in that Congress, it still left too many veterans short of our full promise. Thus, in the current 109th Congress (2004-2005), I have again joined with many colleagues in introducing and advocating for H.R. 302, our Filipino Veterans' Equity Act, to finish the job. As we all know very well, time is of the essence as our WWII veterans increasingly live out their lives without complete justice. In this effort, we are joined by our colleagues in the Philippines, as the attached copy of a letter to me from Ambassador del Rosario reflects.

5. Immigration Priority to Families of Filipino WWII Vets

We are also aware that, while our Filipino WWII vets gained at least the option of citizenship in 1990, their sons and daughters did not gain the right of citizenship or even any special immigration status. With the immigration waiting period from the Philippines now well over ten years in many cases, this has led to the additional injustice of our vets living in our country as full citizens while their own children may not.

Earlier this year I reintroduced H.R. 901, legislation to give priority immigration status to the sons and daughters of Filipino WWII vet citizens. I enclose a copy of my remarks on introduction, and have asked the committee of jurisdiction to advance this needed bill.

6. Compassionate Visitor Visa Act

One of the principal concerns of our Filipino-American community nationwide is to facilitate immigration of family and friends from the Philippines to the United States. This interest is reflected in this statistic: of all foreign-born U.S. citizens living in Hawaii (about 18% of Hawaii's total population), fully 48% were born in the Philippines and emigrated after birth!

As we are all aware, immigration has become substantially more difficult in recent years, especially after 9/11 turned immigration into a largely homeland security-driven process. This is why a principal service of my office is to assist the Filipino-American community with individual immigration concerns (see below.)

One especially severe consequence of our overall immigration policy, especially post-9/11, is the denial of temporary visas to Filipino citizens for visits to our country for emergency or humanitarian reasons. The most tragic cases I have worked on are where our consular office in the Philippines has turned down visas for family members to say goodbye to a terminally ill U.S. citizen in Hawaii, or for a family member to come here to donate an organ to another family member who is a U.S. citizen.

The reason for these denials is that U.S. law establishes a heavy burden on an applicant for a temporary visa to prove that he or she will not default on the visa and will instead return to the Philippines before the visa period expires. This is an impossible burden to meet for many Philippines citizens, especially those without property or a sizable bank account or families.

However, the consequences are especially severe when the visa is sought for family emergency or humanitarian reasons. This is why I introduced in the 108th and 109th Congresses my Compassionate Visitor Visa Act (currently H.R. 900), which removes the presumption against an applicant seeking to visit the U.S. for a true emergency or humanitarian purpose. I enclose a copy of my remarks on introduction, and have asked the committee of jurisdiction to advance this long-overdue bill.

7. Humanitarian Parole

Closely related to my compassionate visitor visa effort, I have identified a little-known existing program of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, referred to as "humanitarian parole," under which temporary visas may be issued under "extraordinary circumstances" to "bring an otherwise inadmissible alien into the United States due to a compelling emergency." Preliminary information is that of the very small number of applications under this program, the approval rate is generally only 20%. I am following up with DHS to assure that (a) applicants with especially severe circumstances are at least made aware of this option, and (b) the program is fully and fairly applied to applicants from the Philippines.

B. Your Congressional Office

1. Office Mission and Resources

My overall job is to represent the people of my district and our Hawaii in our federal government. That means being your voice on the great issues of our day, listening to your concerns, letting you know what your government is doing, and helping you on your individual problems whenever and however I can.

I have a full-service congressional office in Washington, D.C. and throughout my Hawaii district to assist me in performing my duties. More information on my office and activities and opportunities can be found on my website at www.house.gov/case

I want you to know specifically about two of my staff in my Honolulu office who are Filipino-American and who work a great deal with our Filipino-American community. Jackie Conant, whose heritage lies in Ilocos Norte, is one of my caseworkers, specializing in immigration; she can be reached at (808) 541-1986 or else at jacqueline.conant@mail.house.gov. Zeny Muyot, whose heritage lies in Pasay City/Metro Manila, is my community liaison with a focus on our Filipino-American community; she can be reached at the same number or else at zeny.muyot@mail.house.gov.

2. Contact Information

This is how you can contact me and my office and staff generally:

Washington Office
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Neighbor Island Toll Free Numbers
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Kauai/Niihau: 245-1951
Maui: 242-1818

Lanai: 565-7199
Molokai: 552-0160

e-mail: ed.case@mail.house.gov

3. Your Issues

I'd very much like you to contact me with any thoughts, questions, comments or concerns facing your organizations. Also, please feel free to contact any of my staff at either (202) 225-4906 or (808) 541-1986, or by e-mail directly at ed.case@mail.house.gov. My staff's contact information and a list of their issue areas can be found at www.house.gov/case/staff.

4. Signup for Congressional E-mail Newsletter

I use an e-newsletter to provide frequent updates about what's happening in Washington D.C. as well as the 2nd Congressional District and to ask for input. If you haven't signed up and would like to receive these e-mails, please log onto my website at www.house.gov/case/email_list, or you can call or email at the above contacts to be put on our list. I may occasionally ask you to fill out electronic surveys, but I will never release your contact information to anyone else. If you have already signed up, thank you; you do not need to submit your name again.

5. Federal Grants and Resources

I receive many questions and requests for information regarding federal grants and other assistance. You can go to my website for information on such grants and resources and other aspects of our federal government. There, for example, you will find contact information for federal offices in Hawaii, resources compiled by the Congressional Resource Center, and a link to the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (www.cfda.gov). This Catalog includes a listing of about 1,500 federal grant and assistance programs and includes a useful search engine.

6. Arranging a Meeting or Event or Providing Congressional Messages

I truly welcome opportunities to meet personally, discuss issues of mutual concern, and address groups on issues of our day. I also greatly enjoy opportunities to join you at community events or, if I can't make it, to provide a congratulatory or recognition message on special occasions. Please contact Roberta Weatherford in my Honolulu office at (808) 541-1986 or by email at roberta.weatherford@mail.house.gov.

C. This Report Online

For your convenience and potential use, I have placed a copy of this report online under the newsletter section of my website at www.house.gov/case/newsletter.

D. Filipino-American Community Survey

In order to better understand and serve the needs of our Filipino-American community, I have attached a short survey. I've included my address on the back of this sheet, so when you're finished just fold the survey in half, tape it closed, and stamp and mail. In the alternative, you can also email me c/o Jacqueline Conant at jacqueline.conant@mail.house.gov. I greatly appreciate your time and input.

**Congressman Ed Case
Filipino-American Community Survey**

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

1. What are the main concerns of your community?

2. What are the most important and common needs of your members?

3. What are the main challenges facing our Hawaii?

4. What are your main challenges in serving the needs of your community?

5. What additional information or assistance can my office provide that would assist in serving your community?

6. Please list any other questions, needs or concerns.

Mahalo!

**Congressman Ed Case
Attn: Jacqueline Conant
5-104 Prince Kuhio Federal Building
Honolulu, HI 96850**